

## **Substitute B 801**

Chapter 801: A Lifetime Is Only Enough to Love One Person

Butler Thorne had been waiting in the distance, but despite waiting and waiting, Isabelle Willow never brought Jude Crawford back.

Butler Thorne had a very bad premonition, and this feeling grew stronger and stronger. He kept thinking that Isabelle Willow was unusually quiet, neither crying nor panicking. There was an air of tranquility around her, like a wisp of smoke, ready to vanish at any moment.

"Something's wrong, something's happened!" Butler Thorne murmured urgently, then rushed over as quickly as he could.

When he arrived, his steps slowly halted, and he froze. Not far away, Jude Crawford still sat in his wheelchair, as if peacefully asleep. Isabelle Willow lay with her head on his lap, her eyes closed, already... no longer breathing.

Isabelle Willow followed Jude Crawford, one leading, one following.

Strangely, Isabelle Willow bore no signs of injury; she simply passed away naturally.

These two had been entangled all their lives; now the scene was surprisingly gentle and tender, with maple leaves swirling continuously through the air.

Butler Thorne was stunned.

Thud thud thud...

At this moment, the sound of a wooden fish being knocked echoed from somewhere, and in the distance, the ancient bell tower continued to chime incessantly. The sound was clear and ethereal, striking straight to the heart.

Butler Thorne looked up and saw an elderly monk with an otherworldly aura, treading lightly, coming down the path.

The monk gazed at Jude Crawford and Isabelle Willow, shaking his head gently, "Deep affection but shallow fate, shallow fate yet deep affection; so be it, let me grant you another turn of reincarnation."

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Today, under a clear blue sky, the matriarch of the Crawford family went to the temple to burn incense and pray, accompanied by the Crown Prince of the Crawford family, Jude Crawford.

At this time, Jude Crawford was in the prime of his youth, excelling in the business arena, strikingly handsome as ever. Draped in a black cloak, he stood elegantly, drawing the attention of the passing devotees, particularly the young girls who blushed as they stole glances at him.

However, he looked neither left nor right, being accustomed to such admiring gazes, his thin lips pressed lightly together, naturally aloof.

"Which young lord is this, shining so brightly? Sir, I see fate has brought us together; let me give you a fortune's token of love today." At this time, a sage-like monk approached him, speaking with a smile.

Jude Crawford, not believing in Buddhism, turned and walked away.

"Sir, take it." But the monk was quicker, as if rehearsed, directly pressing the fortune token of love into his hand.

Jude Crawford did not take it; the token slipped to the ground, landing right at his feet.

He glanced down, seeing a line of Sanskrit on it.

"CEO, there is a high-level business meeting held later; we need to return," said the secretary as he approached.

Jude Crawford glanced expressionlessly at the monk, then turned and left.

Jude Crawford led the secretary toward the luxury car, when a sharp, harsh voice suddenly rang out beside them, "Isabelle Willow, you are just the Willow family's illegitimate daughter, a little bastard. If not for your slight usefulness, I'd have long destroyed you and your shameless mother. Here's the money for you, take it!"

With a whoosh, a stack of money scattered through the air, landing all over the ground.

"Boss, there's a girl picking up money over there," the secretary whispered behind him.

Jude Crawford did not look over, showing no interest in the girl. His resolute steps did not pause at all, his thin lips lifting indifferently, "Secretary Sutton, is your focus on the girl or the money? Do you need time to deal with it?"

Secretary Sutton behind him broke into a cold sweat, "..."

Jude Crawford reached the luxury car, where the secretary opened the rear door, ready for him to step inside.

Just then, a clear, pleasant voice called out, "Sir!"

Jude Crawford paused, raising his head to see a cool and stunning small face suddenly and forcefully break into his sight.

In her youthful beauty, Isabelle Willow looked at him, gently curling her red lips into a tender and intimate smile, "Sir, you're stepping on my money!"

Jude Crawford looked at the girl before him, recalling the Sanskrit on the fortune token: "You are making noise, she is smiling, together journeying through eternity."

At this moment, the ancient bell atop the temple tower resounded once more.

To love someone, to guard a city, a lifetime is only enough to love one person.

A regret of the past life, a fulfillment in the present life.

If the heavens have feelings, they, too, would grow old.

(End of the Reincarnation Chapter)

(End of the Crawford-Willow Chapter)

...

Hayden Crawford, with Serena Sterling and Caroline Sloan, was returning to Bayside. Throughout the journey, Serena felt restless, as if something had happened.

Serena lay by the window, and unbeknownst to her, it had already started raining outside, a persistent drizzle that made the cold even more biting.

"Mr. Crawford, it's raining," Serena murmured.

At that moment, a warmth enveloped her shoulders as Hayden draped his black coat over her, "Yes, it's raining. Serena, why are your hands so cold?"

Serena was indeed feeling cold, without knowing why. She rested her little head on Hayden's broad shoulder, "It's nothing."

Hayden had the driver increase the car's temperature, then wrapped his strong arm around her, using his warmth to soothe her, "Then let me hold you; it won't be cold after a while."

"Mhm!" Serena nodded; only in Hayden's embrace did her unease slightly ease.

Soon, they arrived back in Bayside, where the weather was sunny and clear, in stark contrast to their journey. They drove to the places they once frequented.

Taking in the scenery outside, Hayden frowned slightly with confusion, "Serena, why do I feel like I've been here before?"

This familiar feeling baffled him, as if he had gone back in time.

"..." Serena thought, Silly, of course you find it familiar; this is my home. More than four years ago, I had brought you back here!

Here, they had spent some of the sweetest times together, and her...first experience was right here with him.

Soon, the luxury car stopped, and Corvus said, "Master, we have arrived."

Hayden and Serena got out of the car, with Caroline Sloan emerging from the vehicle behind them. Together, they returned to the old haunt.

Throughout the journey, Caroline stayed anxious, already convinced that Serena knew everything. This was, after all, the place where Serena had grown up. She feared that this trip to Bayside was Serena's plan to expose her in front of Hayden.

Caroline thought of escaping at the opportune moment, but Serena, having seen through her scheme, had assigned people to keep her under close watch, so tightly that not even a mosquito could escape.

Facing such a clever and peerless opponent as Serena, Caroline found herself quite exasperated.

Chapter 802: Her Deadpan Nonsense

Arriving at this familiar place, Hayden Crawford stepped forward, memories of the past flooding back to him.

It was here that he met that warm and determined girl.

All these years, he had been searching for her.

But it seemed she had disappeared into the vast sea of people, long gone.

Just then, a soft call sounded in his ear, "Mr. Crawford~"

Hayden Crawford quickly turned around and saw Serena Sterling standing behind him, her bright eyes smiling at him.

Hayden paused, inexplicably feeling a sense of searching for her in a crowd a thousand times, and suddenly turning around, there she was amidst the dim lights. He wasn't sure if this was an illusion, but suddenly he felt that Serena Sterling's clear and lively eyes were exactly like that girl's from back then, full of strength.

Maybe it was just his illusion.

How could she possibly be that girl from back then?

Hayden shook his head inwardly, thinking his idea was truly absurd.

"Serena, did you call me?"

"Yes, Mr. Crawford, what were you just thinking about?" Serena blinked, her fox-like eyes playful and agile as she looked at him.

Of course, Hayden would not tell Serena that he had thought of that girl again. How could someone as smart as him dig a hole and bury himself? What a joke!

"Ahem," Hayden cleared his throat lightly, "Nothing much."

"Really?"

Hayden quickly reached out and embraced her slender waist, softly pleading, "Serena, let me off the hook."

Serena huffed, implying she was ready to settle scores with him!

"Lillian, come over here. You should be familiar with this place, right? After all, you saved your big brother here back then and have been thinking about him all these years. Now, please tell us about the situation at that time, leaving no detail out."

Two black-clad bodyguards pushed Caroline Sloan forward, and she almost stumbled, nearly eating dirt, looking a bit embarrassed.

Caroline pitifully looked at Hayden, begging him with her eyes, You see, they're all bullying me~

Hayden didn't pay her any attention. He glanced at Serena, as if to say, Serena, look, there's always someone trying to harm me!

Caroline was speechless. Originally, she had hoped Hayden would protect her, but after witnessing his grievance and coquettishness, she now even saw shadows of being henpecked from Hayden. What's going on?

"Lillian, stop stalling for time, we're all ears now." Serena said with a smile.

Prompted, Caroline, "..."

Caroline swallowed and, reluctantly, began to speak, "That's right, Sister Serena, it was here I saved my big brother. I still remember that day, the snow was falling heavily, and he was unconscious in this icy landscape. I happened to pass by and saved him..."

"How did you save him?" Serena suddenly asked.

Caroline paused.

Serena slowly walked over, her bright eyes staring at Caroline, her gaze sharp, "Lillian, tell me, how did you save him? To save someone frozen, one needs certain medical knowledge. I remember Lillian, you haven't studied medicine, have you? How did you do it?"

Caroline's face turned pale, knowing Serena was there to expose her. But having lurked around back then, she knew everything that happened between them, including every word they exchanged, so she harbored a sliver of hope, believing she could compete with Serena, mixing truths with lies so that Hayden couldn't tell.

However, Caroline didn't expect Serena to pinpoint her most fatal flaw so sharply from a medical perspective.

Caroline was dumbfounded, her mind blank, "This..."

Off to the side, Corvus's eyes lit up, almost worshipping Serena in admiration. Indeed, why hadn't he thought of that?

Hayden's deep and narrow eyes locked onto Serena. He had always known she was wise, never letting him down with her brilliance.

Serena slowly curved her red lips, "What, Lillian, can't answer that? Alright, I'll change the question. When Mr. Crawford was unconscious in the icy world, did he have any other wounds, and where?"

Caroline found this too easy and confidently said, "Yes, big brother was injured, with cuts on his left arm and right thigh."

"Nonsense!" Serena immediately reprimanded, "Mr. Crawford clearly told me that only his right hand was grazed by a branch, suffering minor injuries!"

What?

Caroline was completely shocked. How could it be possible? She had sent people to assassinate Hayden, so she knew his injuries very well.

The nonsense wasn't hers, it was Serena's!

Hayden hadn't spoken all along, but he did lightly crease his brow because it was indeed Serena who was talking nonsense.

Caroline was right; he had injuries on his right arm and thigh, and he had never told Serena he'd been scratched by any branch.

Hayden's gaze fell on Serena, watching her seriously spout nonsense.

"Sister Serena, you're speaking nonsense. Big brother was injured on the right arm and right thigh, not lightly, but seriously, and it was a stab wound from a sharp blade!" Caroline argued.

Serena clasped her small hands behind her back, suddenly asking, "Lillian, how do you know Mr. Crawford was stabbed by a sharp blade?"

Caroline's head thudded, a very bad premonition rising.

Serena arched her delicate eyebrows, her voice clear and composed, "Back then, Mr. Crawford had two injuries. The first was seven inches below his right arm, the second was a knife wound on the outer thigh that bled for four centimeters. It can be determined that the injury was dealt by a military-style knife, but judging from the cutting technique, the two injuries came from two different people, suggesting that Mr. Crawford was fleeing from some kind of assassination attempt back then."

Saying so, Serena's bright eyes landed on Caroline's face, smiling slowly, "You haven't studied medicine, so how could you treat those wounds? Clearly, it wasn't you who saved him back then, but you were there all along."

"Moreover, just now when you talked about Mr. Crawford being stabbed, you were so certain. Why, could it be... it was you who arranged for Mr. Crawford to be stabbed back then?"

As Serena's words reached their climax, her tone became forceful, closing in on Caroline.

Caroline was forced to retreat step by step, realizing that Serena's serious nonsense was a trap for her!

Chapter 803: That Girl Back Then Was Serena Sterling

Caroline Sloan knew that Serena Sterling's purpose this time was not only to uncover the past events but also to reveal the truth of Hayden Crawford's assassination back then!

Caroline remembered the prophecy left by the ancestors of Alani when they perished, predicting that a girl from Alani in a hundred years would be unmatched in the world.

What an incredible Serena Sterling!

Hayden Crawford suddenly narrowed his deep, slender eyes, looking at Serena Sterling in shock. How did she know, how did she know these things?

The injuries he received back then, he hadn't told anyone about. The stab wounds, how many inches deep, whether they were life-threatening, even he wasn't so sure. Caroline observed the whole time but couldn't tell anything unless... it was the girl who healed him back then.

And now Serena Sterling was narrating his injuries in great detail, causing waves of shock to surge in Hayden Crawford's heart.

She...

Serena Sterling didn't look at Hayden, her bright eyes remained on Caroline's face. "Lillian dear, why aren't you speaking? Did I say something wrong, or should I address you as... the Merfolk Clan princess?"

Caroline's pupils shrank; she realized she had been exposed and immediately retreated.

But Serena was faster; she raised her hand and swiftly inserted a silver needle into Caroline's acupoint with her slender white fingers.

Caroline couldn't escape, took the needle, and soon her face began to morph, revealing her true appearance.

The real princess of the Merfolk Clan was already over thirty, but she possessed a charm that kept her youthful, looking as enchanting as ever, with a face extraordinarily captivating.

The Merfolk Clan princess couldn't adapt to being exposed to sunlight. She quickly covered her face, "Ah, my face!"

Since being heavily struck by the ancestors of Alani a hundred years ago, the Merfolk Clan had been lurking in hiding. Now Serena forcibly exposed the Merfolk Clan princess to the sunlight.

Watching the Merfolk Clan princess shatter Caroline's pitiable disguise and swiftly change her face, Corvus' expression drastically changed, "Men, seize her!"

Several black-clad bodyguards quickly stepped forward and captured the Merfolk Clan princess.

"Merfolk Clan princess, you're over thirty, yet you impersonate a mere 20-year-old girl, calling my master 'big brother' at every turn. My goosebumps are all over the floor!" said Corvus.

Corvus truly broke a cold sweat for his master; fortunately, his master was wise and discerning, otherwise, being fooled by a woman in her thirties like this would be a joke for others to laugh at for a year.

The Merfolk Clan princess struggled, "Let me go! Quickly let me go!"

At this moment, Serena stepped forward, gently raised her slender hand to the Merfolk Clan princess's neck, and with a forceful tug, directly removed the jade pendant.

"Serena, that jade pendant is mine! Give it back to me now!"

Serena looked at the jade pendant in her palm, noticing a "Crawford" character on it, nodding as it matched the pendant from her memory!

When Hayden Crawford left back then, he personally handed it to her, and she had kept it in her drawer after returning, but it had soon disappeared.

Now she realized it was first taken by Yasmine and then ended up in the hands of this Merfolk Clan princess.

Serena looked at the Merfolk Clan princess, her red lips curling with amusement, "Is this pendant truly yours?"

Although Serena asked, it was evident she wasn't giving the Merfolk Clan princess a chance to speak. She played with the pendant in her slender white hand, blinking her bright eyes, "I heard Yasmine died recently in prison, cursing me in her last moments, mysteriously and eerily laughing. Merfolk princess, the last person Yasmine saw... was you, wasn't it?"

This time, Caroline accepted her loss; even Yasmine's situation had been predicted by Serena.

Serena's intelligence and meticulousness were evident.

"That's right, I was the last person Yasmine saw, and I told her I would kill you for her, so she willingly gave me the pendant and left those words to mislead Hayden!"

Serena nodded, meaning yes, good, continue.

Merfolk Clan princess, "...Serena, there's a blood feud between the Merfolk Clan and Alani, a shame we can't forget. So we appeared before any of you did, and we're the first to find Isabelle Willow!"

"But at that time, Isabelle was already intended for Mrs. Crawford, with Jude Crawford around, we didn't dare act rashly. So, I became Caroline Sloan, and after Hayden was born, I didn't plan to let him live, conspiring with Zelda Willow and attempting to assassinate him twice."

"Everything was going according to plan. We could have killed Hayden in those attempts, but each time, Hayden encountered someone – you, Serena!"

Hayden knew those assassinations were suspicious, so from the moment Caroline appeared, he kept her close to investigate the truth behind the assassination.

Now, the truth was uncovered by Serena herself; all of it was because of the Merfolk Clan.

But hearing the Merfolk Clan princess's last words, Hayden's handsome face suddenly changed dramatically. He took two quick steps forward, forcefully closing in on the Merfolk Clan princess, "What did you just say, say it again!"

The Merfolk Clan princess burst into laughter, "Hayden, hasn't Serena told you yet?"

Hayden pursed his thin lips; he had actually figured it out but couldn't believe it!

How could it be?

"Hayden, I ordered two assassinations against you. The later one was on the train, and that's when you met Serena."

Hayden nodded, his handsome brows and eyes softened with the gentle traces of nostalgia. The train meeting was the beginning of this substitute marriage story.

Back then, Serena was only 19, wearing a veil, yet daring to cast her bright eyes at him, rebuking him willfully, "I'm the bride marrying into Orchid Court!"

Hayden turned back, his gaze landing on Serena.

Now, Serena stood gracefully, watching him, with a stream of tender spring water pooled in her eyes, coupled with twinkling laughter.

She was smiling at him.

Hayden felt something soft fill his chest, remarkably warm.

"Hayden, hasn't Serena told you that during my first assassination on you, when you fell in the icy snow, the girl who truly saved you was actually her, Serena Sterling!"

Once the Merfolk Clan princess finished her words, Hayden's pupils dilated; even though he had guessed it earlier, hearing the answer left him stunned.

## Chapter 804: You Said It—A Gentleman Uses Words, Not Fists

Serena Sterling is actually that girl from back then?

That girl from back then is actually Serena Sterling!

All these years he had been searching for that girl, but he never expected that she had long since come to his side.

"So, Serena Sterling, do you know how much I hate you? Because you keep ruining my plans. If it weren't for you, Hayden Crawford would be dead by now, the Crawford family would have been shattered, and the revival of the Merfolk Clan would be just around the corner. But you just had to appear."

"A long time ago, I thought about getting rid of you, but your mother, Seraphina Linden, built a fortress around you before returning to Alani. The people serving you are top-notch masters from the folk, and Seth Sullivan has watched you grow up for years, guiding you to Aethelgard. We didn't even have a chance to make a move."

"Serena Sterling, don't think you've won, and I've lost. The battle between the Merfolk and Alani has just begun. I will definitely defeat you!"

Serena Sterling knew how much this Merfolk Princess hated her. She stepped forward two steps and smiled, "Then I will see it through to the end!"

At this moment, the war between Alani and the Merfolk Clan had officially begun.

The Merfolk Princess's gaze fell on Hayden Crawford's handsome face, and she laughed, "Hahaha, Hayden Crawford, by now you must know your own heritage, right? The blood of the innocent flows within you. When Alani fell and was frozen for a century, it wasn't just the work of my Merfolk Clan. You people of Westria were the true contributors to it!"

"I wonder if the Huang River of Westria has washed away the blood of the ancestors of Alani by now. I wonder if the people of Alani have forgotten their deep-rooted hatred for Westria. I wonder if, once you ascend the position of Westria's lord, you'll eventually clash swords with Serena Sterling one day. Hahaha, I really look forward to it!"

Hayden Crawford's handsome face showed no emotional fluctuations, only lightly pressing his thin lips, "Merfolk Princess, why don't you guess if you'll ever have the chance to see that day?"

"You..." The Merfolk Princess stiffened.

"Take her away, watch her carefully, don't let her escape." Hayden Crawford ordered.

"Yes, Master." Corvus quickly took the Merfolk Princess away.

Hayden Crawford turned and looked at Serena Sterling. His deep, narrow eyes fell on her exquisite, small face, stirring up a storm. He had much to ask and many words to say, "Serena..."

Serena Sterling directly interrupted him, "Mr. Crawford, let's go."

"Go? To where?"

"To... my house~"

...

Hayden Crawford followed Serena Sterling back to the place from before. This is where she grew up. The beautiful little village was like a paradise on earth.

Hayden Crawford quickly recognized this place. How could he forget, where four years ago, at a time when his sleep disorder had severely deteriorated, he shared the most wonderful time with her.

It turns out she had once brought him back here.

No wonder the place in the photo seemed so familiar to him back then.

"Miss, Master, you've come back? Quickly wash your hands, dinner is ready, you can eat now." At this time, Auntie Mccoy warmly greeted them.

Hayden Crawford didn't want to eat; he only wanted to have a proper talk with Serena Sterling, "Serena, I..."

Serena Sterling raised her willow eyebrows and coyly glanced at him, then signaled with her eyes toward the washbasin, "Mr. Crawford, quickly wash your hands, and let's eat first."

Hayden Crawford felt anxious like an ant on a hot brick. He sensed that Serena Sterling did it on purpose, probably punishing him for not recognizing her sooner.

Hayden Crawford had no choice but to wash his hands. Auntie Mccoy, being a chef from The Riverlands, cooked an excellent meal, and the dinner was very lavish.

After the long-awaited dinner ended, Hayden Crawford went up to Serena Sterling, speaking softly, "Serena, it's getting late; let's go to bed."

Serena Sterling curved her lips and nodded in agreement, "Sure."

Hayden Crawford's eyes lit up.

At that moment, Auntie Mccoy came over, "Master, your room has been tidied up. You can go rest now."

What did that mean?

Hayden Crawford froze in place, "My... room?"

Does that mean I won't be sleeping with Serena?

Auntie Mccoy shook her head apologetically, "Master, you sleep in your room, and Miss sleeps in her room; your room is downstairs, and Miss's room is upstairs."

"..." Hayden Crawford was unhappy, and he wore his unhappiness on his face, "Ahem, Auntie Mccoy, since you addressed me as Master, should I really be sleeping in separate rooms from your Miss?"

Auntie Mccoy laughed, "Master, calling you Master is just a term of respect. You haven't obtained a marriage certificate with Miss yet, so it doesn't count."

The implication was, don't get ahead of yourself. Wait until you marry our Miss to discuss further!

Hayden Crawford's handsome face turned black, and he immediately looked at Serena, help me quickly!

Serena Sterling took the pillow and quilt from Auntie Mccoy's hands and directly stuffed them into Hayden Crawford's arms, sweetly smiling, "Mr. Crawford, goodnight."

With that, Serena Sterling turned and went upstairs.

Hayden Crawford, "..."

...

Inside the room.

Serena Sterling had just come out of the bathroom; she had just taken a bath, wearing a silk nightgown, looking soft and sleepy.

As she used a towel to dry her long hair, she thought of how Mr. Crawford looked utterly deflated earlier, and a red smile slowly curved on her lips.

Serves him right!

At this moment, a slight sound reached her ears, and then her window was opened from outside.

Who?

Serena Sterling turned her head and immediately saw the tall and handsome figure of Hayden Crawford. He actually... climbed through the window!

Serena Sterling quickly stood up, "Mr. Crawford, you actually broke in through the window? Leave at once, or else... or else I'll call someone!"

Serena Sterling turned to run.

Hayden Crawford nimbly jumped in, then strode forward, wrapping his strong arm around her slender waist, pinning her against the wall. He trapped her delicate frame between the wall and his broad chest, "Little thing, where do you think you're going?"

Being caught, Serena Sterling blinked her clear eyes, glancing at him, "Mr. Crawford, let's talk this over, gentlemen speak but do not fight!"

Hayden Crawford lowered his head and directly claimed her red lips in a kiss.

Mm!

The deep and narrow eyes of Hayden Crawford were hidden in the lamplight, half-bright and half-dark, with a fervent emotion flickering within. He opened his mouth, gently biting the corner of her lips.

Pain.

Serena Sterling winced in pain and started pounding his firm chest with her small hands.

Hayden Crawford released her, his rough fingertips coming to her bitten red lips, softly caressing, chuckling hoarsely, "You said it yourself, gentlemen speak but do not fight."

Serena Sterling, "..."

In the depths of Hayden Crawford's eyes, two eager flames danced. His entire body tensed, unable to suppress the raging waves in his heart; it was her, indeed it was her!

Chapter 805: Please Guide Me Through the Rest of My Life

Now he has confirmed it with his eyes; she is the one he has been searching for all along.

It's her.

It has always been her.

She has always been there.

More than twenty years ago, when she was still in swaddling clothes, a delicate little baby girl, she held onto his index finger and wouldn't let go, smiling sweetly at him.

His mother said, "Hayden, let her be your little bride in the future, okay?"

In the many years that followed, the Crawford family was tumultuous, and he was ambushed and fled to Bayside. In the freezing cold, it was her soft little hands that touched his face. In that snowy night, she gave him a lifetime of unforgettable tenderness and strength.

Later, he met her on the train. That journey leading to Orchid Court for an arranged marriage made her his Mrs. Crawford.

Finally, the figure he had been fervently searching for in his mind overlapped with this exquisite face in front of him.

She was his.

No one was able to take her away.

Yet she was right in front of him, and he didn't even know.

Throughout these years, time was short but emotions were deep. The youthful days he couldn't finish telling were filled with her scattered footprints along the way.

"Serena," Hayden Crawford furrowed his handsome brows and gently kissed her fragrant forehead, pressing down on her with his strong, pulsating body, wanting to share his inner turmoil with her, "Did you know earlier than I did?"

Serena Sterling raised her hand, and that jade pendant engraved with his surname dangled in the air, pulled by the red string. She blinked her delicate eyes at him, "Mr. Crawford, is this what you're talking about? Yes, I knew before you did, but I didn't tell you. I just wanted to see when this big fool would finally find me. You said you would come back for me."

Hayden Crawford cradled her exquisite face in his hands and spoke to her softly, "Serena, I'm sorry I came late... I just...never expected it to be you... I was tossed about from a young age, never dared to hope for such favor from fate... We've been separated several times, but nobody's ever been able to take you away... time and again, you came back to my side..."

His father, Jude Crawford, once said to him, "Hayden, you're luckier than I am."

At that time, Hayden couldn't understand his father's words, but now he finally did.

He was late.

If she hadn't been taken away by Seraphina Linden when she was little, how would things have been between him and her?

Would these years have seen her grow up by his side?

But destiny has its own arrangements. Just one glance on the train, and he was already deeply captivated. Feeling emotion without knowing its origin, an endless, profound affection.

Under Serena's soft palm, his muscles tensed like iron. She sensed his overwhelming surge of emotions.

Her long eyelashes fluttered as Serena slowly reached out, wrapping her arms around his strong waist. "Mr. Crawford, then I shall forgive you because, although you're late, you never truly missed your place. The past cannot be revisited, but for the future, please guide me well."

For the future, please guide me well.

Hayden Crawford's firm lips pressed against her soft, fragrant forehead, kissing it over and over, never seeming to get enough. Somehow, he felt this girl filled his heart entirely.

"In the future, also guide me well." Hayden Crawford's lips moved down, gently pecking at her red lips.

Serena Sterling opened a sweet smile, wrapping her small hands tightly around him and then responding to his kiss shyly yet eagerly.

A few minutes later, the two parted, breathless and flushed.

But their lips remained close, so near they could feel each other's heartbeat and pulse, Hayden's defined hand grasping her slender waist, teasing her as his Adam's apple moved up and down. "Serena, I want..."

They hadn't been intimate for a long time. She didn't allow him to touch her, and now he wanted...

He wanted to restrain himself. He knew he had been frequently demanding, his physical desire intense. Holding her, kissing her, not seeing her all day; just one glance at her, and he would already react.

She was right; he indeed had the nature of a little wild dog.

So it felt like a long time since he touched her, desiring it now, afraid she might refuse.

Serena hugged the man's neck, her swollen, bright lips inching forward to kiss him. "Mr. Crawford, whenever you want, I'm yours... I'm all yours..."

I'm all yours.

Hayden Crawford scooped her up in his arms and laid her on the soft bed, then leaned down.

Serena was always a bit shy, her delicate demeanor carrying an added charm. Her dense lashes trembled nervously; she closed her eyes, not daring to look at him.

"Serena, open your eyes and look at me." Hayden Crawford coaxed as he kissed her red lips in a hoarse voice.

Serena was coaxed into opening her eyes, falling into his burning gaze, as he continued to stare deeply into her.

A blush slowly spread across Serena's exquisite face, her pearly teeth biting her lower lip, her eyes sparkling, her body so soft and tender like a captivating temptress enchanting his soul.

Hayden felt he couldn't hold back anymore; he reached to pull at his belt. But just then, they heard Auntie McCoy's voice from outside, "Where is the young master? The young master is missing?"

Auntie McCoy slapped her thigh, "Oh no, could it be that the young master snuck into the young lady's room?"

"Look, the young lady's window seems to be open."

"Let's hurry and check on the young lady."

Knocking on the door, the aunties anxiously said, "Miss, are you alright? We found the young master missing; be careful not to let him sneak in through the window to get you at night!"

Serena's face turned crimson. She pushed Hayden away, trying to speak.

But Hayden reached for the blanket and covered both of them inside.

"Mr. Crawford... Mmm!"

Hayden lowered his head, blocking her red lips, forceful and domineering. Tonight, no one was going to ruin his plans!

Whoever tried, he'd oppose them!

...

The next morning, Serena woke up late. Last night, she and Hayden had exhausted their energies with each other, going to bed very late.

Hayden hadn't risen either, his strong arms holding her tightly in his embrace. Realizing she had moved, he lazily kept his eyes closed, his lips fondly brushing her forehead. "Serena, sleep a little longer."

Serena felt so warm, the two of them sticking together. His chest was like a furnace, and she turned over to free herself, rolling to the edge of the bed to sleep.

But in the next moment, Hayden's long arm stretched out and pulled her back into his embrace. "Mrs. Crawford, when it's cold, you snuggle into my arms, but when it gets hot, you push me away. You truly exemplify the stark reality of being a woman."

Serena, "..."

At this moment, another knock at the door, with Auntie McCoy's heavy and anxious voice, came through. "Miss, Young Master, there's trouble, something's happened!"

Chapter 806: Through Wind and Rain, Arriving in Aethelgard

Last night, when Serena Sterling didn't open the door, the aunts naturally knew that Mr. Crawford had already climbed in through the window, so they didn't disturb them further.

Now, in the early morning, the aunts hurriedly came over, saying something big had happened. Serena felt a sudden jolt in her heart and instantly sat up on the bed.

The ominous feeling she'd had these past few days seemed to materialize at that moment.

Hayden Crawford also sat up, his sleepiness gone. His deep and narrow eyes had regained their clarity. He reached for a coat and draped it over himself, then went to open the room door.

Serena rose too, feeling the moment the door was opened, the chilly wind outside blew in, making her hands and feet icy cold.

Hayden, tall and handsome, stood by the door, looking at Aunt Sue outside. He spoke in a low voice, "What happened?"

Serena walked over.

Aunt Sue glanced at Serena, then at Hayden. "Sir, something happened to the Crawford family. You and Miss must brace yourselves. Mr. Crawford... passed away!"

What?

Hayden's pupils suddenly constricted, his face changed dramatically in shock, "What did you say?"

How is that possible?

His father was only in his fifties. That night, before they left, they had dinner at home. That night, his father stood there, watching their car drive away, like a steadfast pine tree standing silently in the long river of time, still tall and handsome, yet covered in frost.

"Sir, it's true. Your father passed away in his sleep, and your mother..."

Serena's eyes were red, and she blurted out, "What about Aunt Yara?"

"Miss, Sir's mother also... passed away the next day."

Hiss.

Serena took a deep breath. Upon hearing about Jude Crawford's tragic death, she felt like the sky had fallen, so when it came to Aunt Yara, she already guessed the outcome.

Jude Crawford and Isabelle Willow both passed away.

They were gone.

Serena's frail body swayed twice, then collapsed to the ground.

"Miss!" Aunt Sue exclaimed.

Hayden moved faster, immediately reaching out and pulling the collapsing Serena into his arms.

Serena trembled slightly, large tears rolled down from her eyes, and she buried her tear-streaked face into Hayden's chest, suddenly unable to compose herself for crying.

How could this happen?

Hayden held Serena tightly. Men's emotions are always so reserved and restrained; his long eyes were already tinged with red.

Overnight, he lost his father and mother.

"Mr. Crawford, we... should hurry back."

Hayden nodded, "Prepare the car, we set off immediately!"

...

The sudden tragic news disrupted all plans. Back at the Crawford family, the funeral had already commenced. Hayden and Serena must rush back to attend.

Aunt Iris was still in a coma, and the old Mrs. Crawford, with her white hair, had to bury her children. Serena was most worried about the old lady.

The luxury car was already prepared when Corvus suddenly ran over, "Master, Miss, we just discovered... the Merfolk Clan princess is missing. She must've taken the opportunity to slip away!"

Just now, amidst the chaos of preparing to return to Aethelgard, the Merfolk Clan princess slipped away.

Serena looked in the direction far away, frowning slightly, "Don't worry, I'll meet her again soon. Let her have a few days, we'll head back to Aethelgard at once!"

"Yes."

...

Hayden and Serena rushed back to the City of Aethelgard. Jude Crawford and Isabelle Willow were jointly buried on the cemetery hill. The sky over Aethelgard began to drizzle again, chilly rain, mournfully poignant.

But the old Mrs. Crawford was stronger than they imagined. As the matriarch who had presided over the Crawford family for decades, she had weathered too many storms in her life. When Jude and Isabelle were brought back simultaneously, she sighed and murmured to herself, "Perhaps... it's for the best..."

However, she did grow more white-haired. She did not attend the funeral but shut herself behind closed doors, leaving everything to Hayden and Serena to handle.

In the cemetery, Serena wore a black coat, her long hair tied in a low ponytail, pinned with a small white flower, holding a black umbrella, stood silently in front of the tombstone.

Jude Crawford and Isabelle Willow's grace was thus fixed in everyone's memories.

With rain drizzling, Serena's pale eye sockets were still red and swollen. She murmured, "In fact, that night before leaving, I noticed Dad's unusual behavior, but... it's all my fault."

Serena blamed herself so much. If she hadn't been deceived by the facade Jude Crawford put up, would everything have been different?

She saved many people, but she could not save the ones closest to her.

Hayden was also dressed in black, "Serena, don't blame yourself; Dad had a heart condition, a heart disease needs a heart remedy. If he wouldn't let you heal him, how could you cure him?"

In the end, it was because Jude Crawford had a difficult love life in his lifetime.

Serena remembered conspiring with the old lady, bringing in Jenny. Jenny's arrival brought Jude a brief happiness, making sure he wasn't alone but accompanied by the one he loved at his side.

She couldn't do more, as everyone has their path of love to walk, which she couldn't replace.

Looking at Jude Crawford and Isabelle Willow, Serena whispered, "If there's a next life, I hope Dad will always be loved, and Mom will love bravely, not wasting love."

A gust of wind blew, dispersing Serena's words into the air.

Hayden nodded, "They will."

"Has Zane... returned?" Serena asked.

Zane Crawford's parentage had been revealed; he was Jude Crawford's biological son, making him Hayden's younger brother.

Jude Crawford didn't know until his death. Isabelle knew, but she didn't have the chance to reunite with Zane before she hurriedly followed Jude Crawford.

The day Isabelle saw the cold and charming Zane Crawford on the giant rolling screen in the mall, she didn't expect that it would be the first and last time.

The mother-child bond between Zane and Isabelle was this shallow.

Mentioning Zane, Hayden's handsome brow twitched slightly, he moved his thin lips, "Zane had participated in a cutting-edge medical research development a few days ago because it is confidential, we've only contacted his assistant. If he receives the news, he will definitely return at the first opportunity."

Serena knew that over these years, Zane had become a luminary in the medical world; she knew years ago, he could do it.

At this moment, a sound reached their ears; someone had arrived.

Hayden and Serena turned simultaneously, only to see an extended luxury business car slowly stopping. The assistant opened the rear door, and Zane had returned.

Today, Zane wore black, appearing handsome and aloof; he held a black umbrella, braving Aethelgard's storm to arrive.

## Chapter 807: Loved You With All My Heart

Zane Crawford has finally returned.

The assistant remained in place as Zane Crawford slowly walked over, holding a black umbrella, and approached the gravestone. He bent down and offered the small white flower he held in his hand.

Zane Crawford didn't speak; instead, he stood silently in front of the gravestone.

In truth, he didn't know what he should say.

Zane Crawford's cold, dark eyes fell upon Jude Crawford's photo. This father was too unfamiliar to him, and only today did he learn that Zelda Willow wasn't his biological mother; Jude's heartfelt love, Isabelle Willow, was his real mother.

He seemed to... only sneak into the study when he was very young and touch one of his father's treasured paintings, where he caught a glimpse of Yara.

After that, he never saw Yara again.

Up until now, he hadn't seen Yara in person, not even once.

So, what should he say?

His father, mother, were so unfamiliar to him; what should he say?

"Zane, you're back?" At this moment, a large hand landed on his shoulder and gave it a pat.

Zane Crawford turned his head sideways and looked at Hayden Crawford beside him. He too found it challenging to adjust to the fact that Hayden had suddenly become his older brother. Over the years, he seemed to have always been excluded by the Crawford family, and he had gotten used to it.

"Big brother." Zane called out once, then his cold, dark eyes fell on Serena Sterling's bright almond-shaped eyes behind Hayden.

Serena also looked at him, her clear eyes rippling with a soft smile, so warm, so bright, "Hi, Zane, long time no see.

Yes, long time no see.

She hadn't seen him for a whole four years.

But for Zane Crawford, they had just seen each other not long ago. Upon hearing news of her, he traveled a thousand miles, walked the paths she walked, felt the winds she felt, and quietly reunited with her in places she didn't know.

Zane Crawford faintly curled his lips, skillfully hiding all emotions in his eyes, "Sister-in-law, long time no see."

"Hmm." Serena nodded, the reunion with an old friend even dispelled some of the sorrow of parting.

"Zane, shall we go home?"

Go... home?

Zane Crawford nodded, "Alright."

...

In the Crawford family mansion, Zane Crawford entered the study where the old lady Crawford was already waiting for him.

Regarding his background, someone had to speak, and the ironic part was that Zane was the last to know.

Much later, the old lady Crawford, exhausted, was wheeled out, as Zane stood tall and handsome in front of the floor-to-ceiling window. Having shed the black outer layer, underneath he wore a white shirt and black trousers, showcasing an elegant and cool charisma, captivating one's gaze.

He looked at the distance, unsure of what he was pondering.

"Zane." At this moment, a gentle voice came from behind.

Zane's heart stirred as he turned around, Serena Sterling was already approaching.

"Sister-in-law, are you looking for me?"

Serena nodded, "Zane, what did Grandma say to you just now?"

"Not much, just talked about my background and some things about inheritance distribution."

Serena could tell that he didn't care about these, including... his own background.

His background had become something indifferent to him.

Serena curled her lips and handed the item in her hand to him, "Zane, these are what Aunt Yara left for you."

Zane reached out with his fair and slender hand to take it, glancing down to see, and was swiftly taken aback because these were design drafts that Yara had created over the years.

Yara, as the founder of Fly Jewelry and a generation-defining jewelry matriarch, these manuscripts were one-of-a-kind. She hadn't stopped designing over the years.

Zane looked up at Serena Sterling.

Serena's bright almond eyes sparkled with shining smiles, "Zane, I know Aunt Yara feels very unfamiliar to you; these are all her handwritten designs and her life journey. Aunt Yara was pure-hearted, reluctant to abandon love and freedom, and was caught off guard amidst doubts. Here's her laughter and tears, now transferred to you."

Zane felt as though a string in his heart was suddenly plucked by someone.

Serena took out a separate book, opening its first page, "Zane, back then Aunt Yara always believed she was expecting a girl, so she designed many drafts for her daughter."

Zane was already looking at this particular draft because it was special, with traces where tears long since dried.

A testament through time.

Zane reached out and closed the design draft, "Sister-in-law, what do you want to say to me?"

Serena straightforwardly met Zane's gaze, "Zane, do you blame them?"

"Blame? Blame whom?"

"Your father, mother, grandmother... you can blame them all."

Zane stared at Serena, "Do you want to convince me not to blame them?"

Serena slowly lifted her head, "Never having experienced another's hardships, one shouldn't advise others to be kind. Zane, I don't want to convince you; you have a thousand and one reasons to blame them — Uncle Crawford's aloofness, Aunt Yara's absence, Grandma's partiality toward Hayden. To you, every one of them might even be less than Zelda Willow. At least... Zelda Willow once loved you with all her heart."

"In the emotional entanglements and grievances of the previous generation, you were the most innocent, and the greatest victim. As parents, Uncle Crawford and Aunt Yara were absent from your entire life, and in the future, they won't be coming back."

"I'm not trying to persuade you into anything; children from authentic families grow up with light in their eyes, that happiness accompanies them for life. But some children spend their lives healing from their childhoods. Zane, I hope you won't become the latter; life's greatest obsession is actually letting go of yourself. I only hope you can find time in your future to slow your pace, slow it even more, read the stories of Uncle Crawford and Aunt Yara, listen to the voices they left behind. Although they never participated in your life, you are their greatest pain and regret. May the spring breezes they once felt slowly brush your face."

Serena had neither qualification nor position to say anything to Zane. Everyone in the Crawford family owed this child an apology, except for Aunt Iris.

The night before they set off, they had a last supper with Jude Crawford and Yara, but what about Zane?

He had left the Crawford family many years ago, and in the future... it might be impossible for him to return.

Upon suddenly hearing the tragic news of Jude Crawford and Yara, Zane was numb and dull, lacking much emotion, functioning like a robot, hurrying back until just a moment ago.

But now listening to Serena's gentle voice, a surge of emotions quickly swept through Zane's chest, coming fiercely and intensely, instantly engulfing him.

His cold, dark eyes at this moment began to steam, reddening gradually.

A short story from Crawford and Willow each day

In front of the temple, Jude Crawford lifted his foot, underneath his polished black shoe certainly lay a one-hundred-yuan note.

Glancing indifferently, he turned to get in the car.

"Sir!"

A soft and pleasant voice again sounded near his ear.

Jude Crawford looked back once more, Yara at fourteen still had youthful features, but already the frame for a stunning beauty had formed. Today, her long hair was loose, and her facial features were captivating, leaving a lasting impression.

"Sir, may I add you on WeChat?" Yara took out her phone, her almond eyes dark and watery, looking at him.

Jude Crawford slightly pressed his thin lips, "No."

With that, he got into the car, and the luxury vehicle sped away.

ps: Starting today, I'll update a small story of Crawford and Willow daily, follow Xue Xue's Weibo at Liuli Xue Xue skr.

Chapter 808: Mess with Him? Yes, Mess with Him!

Besides Aunt Iris, the girl in front of him is the second person who brings warmth to him.

The encounter on the streets of Aethelgard back then left a lasting impression on him, and since then she has become the irreplaceable person in his life.

Zane Crawford looked at Serena Sterling, his thin lips pressed together, "Serena..."

Before he could call out "Serena," someone came over, "Zane, Serena, what are you talking about?"

Hayden Crawford arrived.

This conversation came to an abrupt end.

Serena turned her head, slightly tilting her head, "I was just talking to Zane for a while, nothing much."

"Hmm," Hayden nodded, he walked over and reached out his large hand, enclosing Serena's soft and delicate hand in his palm, then looked at Zane, "Zane, come down for dinner together."

From the moment Hayden appeared, the warmth and tenderness in Zane's eyes had faded, as if the softness of that moment was just an illusion. He returned to his usual cold elegance, "Alright, brother, you and sister-in-law go ahead, I'll be there later."

Hayden led Serena away.

Zane stood where he was, watching their disappearing backs and their tightly held hands, a hint of dimness flickering in his eyes.

...

Hayden led Serena out, "Serena, those design drafts you handed over to Zane, were they from my mom or were they your idea?"

Serena blinked her eyelashes and said shyly, "Mr. Crawford, it was my idea, but I believe it was also Mom's intention!"

Jude Crawford and Isabelle Willow left this world too hastily, leaving too many regrets, too many unspoken words for Zane. Serena believes this was also Aunt Yara's intention.

Hayden looked at Serena's intelligent and lively appearance, he had already guessed it was her idea, and naturally Zane could guess it too.

Such a Serena, how could Zane ever forget her?

No matter what kind of girl Zane might meet in his life, it seems none of them can replace her.

Since finding out Zane is his biological younger brother, Hayden naturally feels a stronger familial bond, after all, as the elder brother he's like a father figure. However, he can let go of anything, except Serena Sterling.

That's why he went in just now.

"Serena, when are we leaving?"

Serena thought for a moment, "Since we've come to Aethelgard, let's wait a few days. I'm worried about my dad and mom, plus I haven't seen Leah in a long time and I've heard... Justin Xavier is getting married, right?"

Mentioning Justin Xavier, Hayden, his good brother, quickly furrowed his brows, it was clear he meant "I don't know him," he nodded, "It seems so."

Serena glanced at him, "What do you mean by 'seems'? Either he is or he isn't."

Hayden nodded silently, "He is."

"Oh." Serena immediately pushed Hayden away, "Then you go play with your good brother. Life's three great joys—marrying a beautiful wife. You, who grew up in diapers with him, should go congratulate him properly."

After speaking, Serena turned and left.

Hayden, "... " What did he do wrong? Why was he ignored again?

...

Julian Rathborne and Seraphina Linden attended the funeral, the passing of a friend struck them heavily, everyone's mood was shrouded in gloom.

Old Mrs. Rathborne spent a long time accompanying her good friend, Mrs. Crawford, who gradually regained her spirits, and of course, they received a good news—Iris Crawford woke up.

Iris Crawford finally opened her eyes after being in a coma.

After the rain passed and the sun broke through, the warm autumn sunlight shone on everyone. Everyone stood at a distance, Iris Crawford stood quietly in front of Jude Crawford and Isabelle Willow's graves wearing a black coat, commemorating the past, completely bidding farewell to the first half of her life.

Iris Crawford rested her head on Mrs. Crawford's lap, who lovingly stroked her daughter's long hair, "Iris, what are your plans next?"

Iris looked up, her eyes that had been dormant for years gradually lighting up, "Mom, I want to go on a trip around the world."

Mrs. Crawford nodded, "Good."

Iris Crawford packed her luggage and embarked on a solo journey. Serena Sterling frequently received postcards from her from all around the world, and Iris left her own presence in many places, her smile grew increasingly brighter, her eyes becoming increasingly radiant.

Six months later, Serena Sterling saw Iris Crawford's social media updates, where her aunt Iris was in a relationship, and that boyfriend looked at her with eyes full of her.

Serena Sterling knew, Aunt Iris had moved on and found her true happiness.

After Mrs. Crawford regained her spirits, she began to worry for her good friend, Old Mrs. Rathborne. On a sunny afternoon, the two friends sat on a swing, each holding a cup of milk tea, Mrs. Crawford squinted, "Old Rathborne, has your son Marcus found a girlfriend yet?"

Old Mrs. Rathborne chewed on her pearl milk tea, thinking it tasted quite good, but upon hearing this topic, she immediately glanced at her friend, "Tess, why are you bringing up that useless thing when we're in such good spirits, it's really a buzzkill!"

Because her son had yet to find a girlfriend, she's often teased by those old ladies, and over time, even Old Mrs. Rathborne had given up on her son.

Mrs. Crawford sighed, "Old Rathborne, ever since Jude and Yara's accident, I feel this time flies too fast, gone in a blink, so we should do something meaningful with the limited time we have."

Old Mrs. Rathborne leaned in with her ear, "What are you thinking of doing?"

Mrs. Crawford said mysteriously, "Tonight we'll secretly sneak a woman onto Marcus's bed, make it happen!"

"Make it happen?"

"Yes, make it happen!"

"But what if Marcus gets angry?"

"What are you afraid of? Can he be fiercer than you? Just cry in front of him!"

Old Mrs. Rathborne exchanged glances with Mrs. Crawford, then their milk teas knocked together, this idea was indeed brilliant like a chess strategy.

Unknowing Marcus Kingsley, "..."

...

Marcus Kingsley had been very busy during this period, combined with the departure of his longtime friend Jude Crawford, his mood had been very low, everyone at the company didn't dare to breathe loudly.

At night, Marcus returned to the Rathborne family mansion, he usually stayed at his own villa, but Old Mrs. Rathborne claimed to have a headache, feeling unwell, and pitifully said something like no one would know if she died, coaxing him to stay, Marcus didn't know who the old lady who happily drank milk tea with Mrs. Crawford was.

Marcus finished reviewing all the documents in the study, then returned to his room and took a cold shower in the bathroom.

#### Chapter 809: Tell Her to Come Over

In the room, Julian Rathborne, fresh from a shower, wore a black silk nightgown, his short hair still misted with water, exuding an air of nobility and extraordinary presence.

He used a towel to wipe the water droplets from his short hair, then got into bed, but quickly realized something was wrong when he reached into the covers and touched a person.

Who?

In Julian Rathborne's alluring eyes, a sharp coldness immediately surged. He got out of bed and yanked off the covers.

Underneath the covers was a very young girl, dressed in a sexy camisole, with a pretty face, a curvaceous figure, and fair skin. Any man finding such a beauty hidden in his bed would consider it a big surprise, impossible to refuse.

But Julian Rathborne's handsome face instantly turned grim. He looked down at her imposingly, "Who are you, and who let you in?"

"Mr. Rathborne, don't be angry. It was Old Mrs. Rathborne who let me in."

Old Mrs. Rathborne?

Julian Rathborne wasn't surprised at all. Who else would dare to secretly stash a woman in his bed but her?

The girl looked at Julian Rathborne, her cheeks flushed red. She squirmed slightly on the bed, striking a seductive pose, and pouted pitifully at Julian Rathborne, coyly saying, "Mr. Rathborne, Old Mrs. Rathborne let me in... to come in..."

The girl seemed embarrassed to speak and bit her red lip, "Old Mrs. Rathborne let me come in... to serve you. I... I am willing..."

This girl was quite young, knowing that men usually can't resist her kind of coy shyness, especially men in their forties who favor the youthful charms of young girls.

However, Julian Rathborne wasn't swayed. He pressed his thin lips together and said coldly, "Get out of my room!"

"..."

What?

The girl was stunned.

Julian Rathborne had no patience. He reached out, grabbed the girl, pulled her off the bed, opened the door, and threw her out.

The girl, still wearing her skimpy and sexy nightgown, screamed and covered herself as she was thrown out.

At this moment, Old Mrs. Rathborne came upon the scene, "Julian, what happened?"

Julian Rathborne glanced at Old Mrs. Rathborne, "Mom, you should be more aware of this than anyone else."

"..." Old Mrs. Rathborne took a breath and then pointed at the girl, "You... who are you, such audacity to try something like this on my son. My son has always been upright and principled. Someone, where is the butler, get her out of here immediately!"

Butler Felix quickly arrived and, without a word, took the girl away. It was obvious this wasn't his first time doing this, quite practiced indeed.

Old Mrs. Rathborne approached Julian Rathborne with a nervous laugh, "Son, don't be angry. I've already chased that girl away for you."

With that, Old Mrs. Rathborne adjusted her clothing and whispered, "It's fine, son. Tell me honestly, are you not interested in this type of girl? Just let me know what you like, and I'll handle it for you. I guarantee you'll be satisfied, alright?"

Julian Rathborne shot Old Mrs. Rathborne a cold glance.

Old Mrs. Rathborne looked as though she'd suffered a harsh blow, clutching her chest painfully, her eyes wide with shock, "Son, you... you aren't... unable, are you?"

Three black lines appeared on Julian Rathborne's forehead, "..."

Women, such a nuisance!

He turned to enter the room.

"Wow!" At this moment, Old Mrs. Rathborne began to cry, lamenting bitterly, "What have I done to deserve this, giving birth to such a son... Where is my daughter-in-law, please come quickly, I've been waiting in such agony... I'm afraid I won't see you before I die, oh my beloved daughter-in-law..."

Beryl immediately supported Old Mrs. Rathborne, "Sir, look at how you've upset Old Mrs. Rathborne. Her health is poor lately, the doctor said she shouldn't be agitated, yet here you are upsetting her."

Watching the duo's theatrical performance, Julian Rathborne, "..."

As Julian Rathborne's headache grew, a melodious ringtone suddenly started playing. It was a phone call.

Julian Rathborne picked up the phone, and upon seeing the flashing name on the screen, his tightly furrowed brows gradually relaxed, and a faint smile of amusement appeared at the corner of his lips.

Old Mrs. Rathborne was a sharp woman. Crying while stealthily watching Julian Rathborne, upon seeing that mischievous smile at the corner of Julian's lips, her heart skipped a beat—there was hope!

Instantly, Old Mrs. Rathborne ceased her tears.

Julian Rathborne answered the call without speaking, and soon Seraphina Linden's voice came through, "Hey, Mr. Rathborne, can you return that martial arts manual to me?"

She'd been wanting that martial arts manual. Julian Rathborne brought it back but hadn't opened it to see what was inside that drew her so much.

Julian Rathborne curled his lips, his voice low and magnetic, "Sure, come over to get it."

"Really? Where are you now?"

Julian Rathborne directly gave the address of the Rathborne family's mansion and then hung up. At that moment, he realized the earlier noisy scene had somehow quieted down. Old Mrs. Rathborne, Beryl, and Butler Felix were all intently watching him.

Julian Rathborne pressed his thin lips together.

"Waa-" Old Mrs. Rathborne realized, sniffled a few more times, then shuffled over to Julian Rathborne and nudged him, "Son, I have a headache, such a bad headache."

Julian Rathborne replied humorously, "Mom, you should go back to your room to rest. Just as well, your daughter-in-law is about to arrive, and you won't get to meet her this time."

Heavens!

Old Mrs. Rathborne's jaw dropped open, she immediately stood tall, "Headache? Who said I have a headache? I'm as fit as a fiddle!"

Saying that, Old Mrs. Rathborne grabbed Julian Rathborne's sleeve, "Son, you're not joking, are you? Is my daughter-in-law really coming over? What kind of girl is she?"

Julian Rathborne, "You'll see for yourself soon enough."

"You, being all mysterious, as always, never let me down. Truly my son!"

Julian Rathborne, "..."

"This is making me quite nervous, meeting my daughter-in-law for the first time. I have to dress up, make myself presentable. Beryl, come help me do my hair and change my clothes."

"Alright, Old Mrs. Rathborne."

Old Mrs. Rathborne happily returned to her room with Beryl to prepare.

Butler Felix remained, and Julian Rathborne glanced at him.

Butler Felix shook his sore arm. Over the years, he'd thrown out hundreds, if not thousands, of girls, but this time he was finally free.

Butler Felix raised his hand, giving Julian Rathborne a thumbs up.

Chapter 810: Do You Want Me to Give You Another Son?

Seraphina Linden has been in a slump lately. She really couldn't understand how Yara, someone who had been living well with her in Alani for so many years, could just leave as soon as they returned.

In the end, she concluded that men are truly toxic!

Seraphina was heartbroken and sad for a long time, even putting aside the recovery of the martial arts manual. Now that the gloom has cleared and everyone is beginning to live well, she has come to recover the manual.

What she didn't expect was Julian Rathborne agreed so readily, directly letting her come pick it up.

Seraphina followed the address to the Crawford family mansion. The estate was quite grand, with pavilions and towers—clearly a top-tier wealthy family's residence.

At the time, Seraphina chose Julian Rathborne entirely because she favored his perfect genes. Now it seemed this man not only had good genes but was also ultra-wealthy.

As Seraphina walked in, she saw the lights up ahead. Old Mrs. Rathborne, Beryl, and Butler Felix were already standing outside to personally welcome her.

What a grand entrance.

Seraphina was stunned in place.

Old Mrs. Rathborne spotted Seraphina from afar. She quickly came forward, her joy so overwhelming as if to say, "My long-lost son!"

Old Mrs. Rathborne approached Seraphina, grabbed her hand, and thoroughly looked her up and down before nodding in satisfaction, "Good! Very good! Excellent!"

Seraphina felt a bit embarrassed. She blinked her lashes, "Excuse me... is this Julian Rathborne's home? I've come to find Julian Rathborne."

"Yes, this is the Rathborne home. I am Marcus Kingsley's mother," Old Mrs. Rathborne quickly introduced herself.

What?

So this is the grandmother of Caden, Pip, and Stella?

Seraphina curled her lips into a smile, "Hello, Mrs. Rathborne. I am Serena's mommy, and my name is Seraphina Linden."

Old Mrs. Rathborne only knew her daughter-in-law was coming but didn't know it was Serena's mommy. Old Mrs. Rathborne paused and then realized, "It's you? Is it really you? It was you who slept with my son Marcus Kingsley and ran away years ago?"

Seraphina, emmm...

Old Mrs. Rathborne grabbed her small hand, "Seraphina, our Rathborne family is a respectable family. Back then... when Marcus was with you, he was a... young virgin. You've left him once, you can't leave him again. You must take full responsibility for him!"

"..." Seraphina realized, that Old Mrs. Rathborne was quite a lively sort.

Just then, a deep, magnetic voice came to her ears, "What are you all talking about?"

Seraphina looked up and saw Julian Rathborne in the corridor ahead.

Julian Rathborne had changed out of his black pajamas and was now wearing a clean, blue casual knit top and black pants. He stood there, noble and aloof, looking down at her with one hand in his pocket.

Before Seraphina could speak, Old Mrs. Rathborne had already smiled brightly and said, "What, even you want to know what the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are chatting about?"

Mother-in... law?

Seraphina was confused. What did this mean?

Old Mrs. Rathborne was so enthusiastic, there must be a catch. Seraphina's gaze turned to Julian Rathborne's handsome face, searching for answers.

Julian Rathborne didn't intend to hide anything from her; he had his own plans, "Come here."

He motioned for her to go over.

Old Mrs. Rathborne quickly let go of her hand, "Seraphina, go ahead, Marcus is calling you!"

Seraphina chuckled and quickly walked over to Julian Rathborne's side and whispered, "Mr. Rathborne, what exactly is going on, where is that martial arts manual, quickly return it to me!"

"The martial arts manual is with me, don't worry, you'll get it, but you must do something for me," Julian Rathborne said.

"What thing?"

Julian Rathborne reached out and wrapped his arm around her fragrant shoulders, "My mom keeps pestering me for a daughter-in-law. Now you must cooperate with me in acting to satisfy my mom, understand what I mean?"

Seraphina understood; this was why he had called her over. Just as she thought, when did this man become so agreeable!

"You don't want to? I don't like to force people either; if you're unwilling, forget it. I can find someone else, but that martial arts manual..." Julian Rathborne released her fragrant shoulders.

Seraphina quickly grabbed his sleeve, her eyes sparkling mischievously, "Deal! Isn't it just acting to make the old lady happy? I'm quite charming, especially popular with the grandparent generation. I'll definitely make Old Mrs. Rathborne happy!"

Julian Rathborne looked at her clever demeanor. Her smile was the best, bright and unmatched.

Julian Rathborne quickly withdrew his gaze, looking slightly awkward.

Then Seraphina let go of him and walked straight to Old Mrs. Rathborne, her voice sweet and lively, "Mom!"

"Yes!" Old Mrs. Rathborne quickly responded, this pair of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law were really bold to call and answer each other.

Old Mrs. Rathborne even took out a large red envelope and stuffed it into Seraphina's arms, "Seraphina, this is from your mom!"

Seraphina roughly understood that this red envelope was akin to a bribe or something, but it was so heavy. Old Mrs. Rathborne's generosity was truly remarkable.

Seraphina accepted the red envelope and Julian Rathborne turned to go inside. Seraphina soon entered the mansion, arm in arm with Old Mrs. Rathborne.

...

In the living room, Old Mrs. Rathborne said, "Seraphina, it's so late, have you eaten dinner yet? Would you like me to have Beryl make you something delicious?"

Seraphina felt a bit hungry, "Mom, then I won't stand on ceremony."

"No need to be polite; this is your home too, Seraphina. Do you have any food preferences?"

Seraphina shook her head, "None. I'm not a picky eater, very easy to please."

"Not picky is good, good for childbearing!" Old Mrs. Rathborne said as she looked at Seraphina's slender and toned figure, her eyes smiling, "Seraphina, would you like to give Marcus another son?"

Was Old Mrs. Rathborne being this direct?

Seraphina accepted it calmly and looked up at the man who was heading upstairs, calling sweetly, "Marcus."

Julian Rathborne paused his steps and turned to look at Seraphina.

Now, Seraphina stood beside Old Mrs. Rathborne, looking gentle and endearing. The warm golden light in the dining room highlighted her delicate features, making her radiant and charming. She tilted her head and smiled at him, "Marcus, mom wants me to give you another son, do you want that~"

That night, she had climbed onto his bed, onto his body, whispering to him, "I want to give you a daughter~"

Now, standing in the light, she looked at him with a smile, "Marcus, do you want me to give you another son~"

Julian Rathborne's throat tightened, and he pursed his thin lips without speaking.

Seraphina withdrew her gaze and looked pitifully at Old Mrs. Rathborne, "Mom, I do want to give Marcus another son, but lately, Marcus has been so busy with work that he hasn't had time to make a baby with me~"